

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8925

INFO USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 AMMAN 4475

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, JO

SUBJECT: JORDANIAN INTERNAL POLITICAL DYNAMICS/ AN UPDATE

REF: 74 AMMAN A-60

1. SUMMARY: IN SPITE OF DISTURBING ECONOMIC TRENDS WHICH PORTEND LONG-RUN POLITICAL PROBLEMS FOR REGIME, MOST IMPORTANT INTERNAL POLITICAL RELATIONSHIPS IN JORDAN HAVE NOT BEEN FUNDAMENTALLY AFFECTED WITHIN PAST YEAR. POWER AND INFLUENCE CONTINUE TO LIE IN INTERACTION OF MONARCHY WITH EAST BANKER-DOMINATED SECURITY APPARATUS. NEVERTHELESS, TRIPARTITE BASIS OF POWER--MONARCHY, PRIME MINISTRY, AND LEADERSHIP OF JORDAN ARAB ARMY--COMING INCREASINGLY UNDER CRITICISM AS REPRESENTING
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ELITE GROUP DIVORCED FROM "REAL" JORDANIANS. KING HUSSEIN'S ALLEGED "CRONYISM" COMING UNDER FIRE. NEW

PRIME MINISTER BADRAN, STILL AN UNKNOWN QUANTITY, IS REGARDED AS INTERIM FIGURE TASKED WITH INSURMOUNTABLE JOB OF CORRECTING MYRIAD OF PROBLEMS (INFLATION, DETERIORATION OF PUBLIC SERVICE)--OR OF ACTING AS REGIME'S SCAPEGOAT FOR THESE PROBLEMS. RIFAI WIDELY EXPECTED ULTIMATELY TO RETURN TO POWER. JAF RANK-AND-FILE CHAFING UNDER "FAVORITISM" PROMOTION SYSTEM AND INFLATIONARY PRESSURES WHICH HAVE HALVED RECRUITS' PAY IN TWO YEARS.

2. ECONOMIC ISSUES SUPPLANTED ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT AS AREA OF PRIME CONCERN TO MOST JORDANIANS. ENDEMIC INFLATION ADDED URGENCY TO LONGSTANDING ISSUE OF HIGH-LEVEL CORRUPTION, TOLERATED IN PAST BUT NOW RESENTED BY HARD-PRESSED MIDDLE CLASS. AT SAME TIME, DECIBILE LEVEL OF EAST BANKER-PALESTINIAN RIVALRY HAS DIMINISHED, DUE PRIMARILY TO DIFFICULT POLITICAL CIRCUMSTANCES OF PALESTINIANS FOLLOWING RABAT AND DEBACLE IN LEBANON.

3. THUS, WHILE BASIC STRUCTURE AND BALANCE OF POWER IN JORDAN REMAINS BASICALLY UNCHANGED, KING HUSSEIN MAY HAVE TO MAKE SIGNIFICANT ADJUSTMENTS IN HIS AND GOJ'S APPROACH TO COPE WITH DIFFICULT BREAD-AND-BUTTER ISSUES WHICH COULD PROVE DESTABLIZING IF NOT DEALT WITH DEFTLY AND SOON. END SUMMARY.

4. THIS CABLE SUMMARIZES AIRGRAM WHICH PROVIDES UPDATE OF 1974 REFAIR ON JORDANIAN INTERNAL POLITICAL DYNAMICS.

5. JORDANIAN ECONOMY IS BOOMING, BUT DISTURBING ECONOMIC TRENDS PORTEND IMPORTANT LONG-RUN POLITICAL PROBLEMS BOTH IN CIVILIAN AND MILITARY SECTORS. MEANWHILE, THE MOST IMPORTANT INTERNAL POLITICAL RELATIONSHIPS IN JORDAN HAVE NOT BEEN FUNDAMENTALLY AFFECTED WITHIN PAST YEAR. POWER AND INFLUENCE CONTINUE TO LIE IN INTERACTION OF MONARCHY WITH EAST BANKER-DOMINATED SECURITY APPARATUS (PRIMARILY ARMY) WHILE MONARCHY, PRIME MINISTRY, AND LEADERSHIP
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OF JORDAN ARAB ARMY PROVIDE KEY SUPPORTS OF SYSTEM. IN SPITE OF RECENT CHANGES IN FOVERNMENT ORGANIZATION CHART, MAIN PERSONALITIES IN POWER IN 1974, AMONG THEM FORMER PRIME MINISTER ZAYD RIFAI AND CINC ZAYD BIN SHAKER, HAVE MANAGED FOR MOST PART TO MAINTAIN INFLUENCE WITH KING.

6. PRIMARY FORCES OF POLITICAL POWER. MONOPOLIZATION OF JORDANIAN POLITICAL LIFE BY HASHEMIT FAMILY FOR MORE THAN HALF-CENTURY HAS MEANT THAT REAL POWER IN

COUNTRY OPERATES THROUGH BYZANTINE NETWORK OF PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS WHICH CARRY MORE WEIGHT THAN IDEOLOGICAL FACTORS OR SOCIAL GROUP INTERESTS.

A. THE MONARCHY. ALTHOUGH LOYALTY OF EAST BANKER (AS OPPOSED TO PALESTINIAN) POPULATION FOR HASHEMITE MONARCHY CONTINUES TO BE EMBODIED IN PERSON OF KING HUSSEIN, KING INCREASINGLY IS BECOMING TARGET OF PERSONAL CRITICISM CENTERING UPON ACCUSATIONS OF "CRONYISM" AT EXPENSE OF JORDAN'S TRUE INTERESTS. BECAUSE PERIOD 1974-76 HAS WITNESSED INCREASE IN NOMINAL POWERS KING HUSSEIN HAS RESERVED TO EXECUTIVE BRANCH, POPULAR FEARS HAVE GROWN THAT HE IS "ISOLATING" HIMSELF FROM "REAL" JORDANIANS. REPLACEMENT OF ZAYD RIFAI BY MUDAR BADRAN AS PRIME MINISTER SOMEWHAT MUTED THESE CRITICISMS, BUT RULING ELITE CONTINUES TO LABOR UNDER IMAGE OF SELF-SERVING CORRUPTION. CROWN PRINCE HASSAN HAS THUS FAR REMAINED FREE OF THIS TAINT. ON OTHER HAND, HASSAN, IN JORDANIAN EYES, LACKS KING'S PERSONAL CHARM, AND HE LACKS PERSONAL ENDEARMENT OF PUBLIC, DESPITE HIS TIRELESS ADVOCACY OF JORDAN'S ECONOMIC PROJECTS. THERE ARE INDICATIONS, HOWEVER, THAT WITH INSTALLATION OF COMPARATIVELY WEAK BADRAN GOVERNMENT, HASSAN'S INFLUENCE MAY BE GROWING.

B. PRIME MINISTRY. MOST LOCAL OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT BADRAN WAS APPOINTED ONLY AS TEMPORARY EXPEDIENT AND WILL REMAIN ONLY FEW MONTHS. THERE ARE DIFFERING THEORIES TO EXPLAIN WHY KING HUSSEIN ACCEPTED RIFAI'S RESIGNATION; ACCOUNTS MOST OFTEN HEARD: 1) RIFAI WAS VICTIM OF AMERICAN AND SAUDI IRE
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(OR AT LEAST OF JORDANIAN PERCEPTIONS OF SUCH) OVER HIS HANDLING OF HAWK AIR DEFENSE NEGOTIATIONS; 2) RIFAI HAS BEEN TEMPORARILY RETIRED IN ORDER TO NEUTRALIZE INCREASING POPULAR DISSATISFACTION OVER PROBLEMS OF INFLATION AND DETERIORATION OF PUBLIC SERVICES; 3) KING HUSSEIN HAS DECIDED TO TRANSFER FOREIGN POLICY DECISION-MAKING PROCESS TO ROYAL DIWAN, DECENTRALIZING SOMEWHAT FORMER SYSTEM WHEREBY

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 AMMAN 4475

ALL POLICY-MAKING WAS CONTROLLED BY KING AND RIFAI ALONE. THIS THEORY ASSUMES THAT BADRAN WILL CONFINE HIS DUTIES TO DEALING WITH DOMESTIC AFFAIRS. (EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT KING HAS NO INTENTION OF RELINQUISHING ANY OF HIS FOREIGN AFFAIRS PREROGATIVES.) WHILE THEREMAY BE KERNEL OF TRUTH IN THESE THEORIES, MAIN POLITICAL IMPACT IS IN LOCAL PERCEPTIONS OF TRUTH. BADRAN IN MEANTIME REMAINS VULNERABLE, SUPPORTED BY NO CONSTITUENCY OF HIS OWN AND FACED WITH MANDATE TO OVERCOME SEEMINGLY INTRACTABLE PROBLEMS. RIFAI IS WIDELY EXPECTED TO RETURN TO POWER.

C. JORDAN ARMED FORCES. JAF MAKES VIRTUALLY NO ALLOWANCE FOR MERIT IN ITS PROMOTION PROCEDURES AND PREFERS TO PLACE GREATER WEIGHT ON PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL
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TRIBAL LOYALTIES. PRESENT GHQ HIERARCHY IS WEAKEST OF LAST FOUR YEARS. VOLUME OF COMPLAINTS AMONG RANK-AND-FILE IS INCREASING, BOTH BECAUSE OF FRUSTRATION OVER PROMOTION POLICY, AND BECAUSE OF SEVERE INFLATIONARY PRESSURES. BUYING POWER OF AVERAGE

RECRUIT'S SALARY IS HALF THAT OF TWO YEARS AGO.
MILITARY PERSONNEL FORCED TO RESORT TO FORBIDDEN
EXPEDIENT OF TAKING SECOND JOB TO SUPPLEMENT PAY.
MORALE HAS BEEN AFFECTED ACCORDINGLY. NEWLY-INSTITUTED
PROGRAM OF MILITARY CONSCRIPTION COULD FURTHER STRAIN JAF
BUDGET. IN MEANTIME, KING TENDS TO BE MORE PREOCCUPIED WITH
HARDWARE THAN WITH WELL-BEING OF TROOPS, ALTHOUGH HE SHOWS
SOME SIGNS RECENTLY OF BECOMING MORE AWARE OF LATTER FACTOR.
THUS, WHILE KING HAS SUPPORT OF ARMED FORCES, SITUATION IS
POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS.

7. ISSUES.

A. INFLATION. SINCE 1974, ECONOMIC ISSUES HAVE
SUPPLANTED ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT AS AREA OF PRIME CONCERN
TO MOST JORDANIANS. (INFLATION WAS COVERED IN AMMAN A-62
NOTAL). TOPIC HAS ADDED FOCUS AND URGENCY TO LONGSTANDING
ISSUE OF HIGH-LEVEL CORRUPTION.

B. CORRUPTION. ALLEGED HIGH-LEVEL CORRUPTION, WHILE
HISTORICALLY CONSIDERED ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOR, BECOMING MORE
AND MORE WIDELY BELIEVED AND RESENTED AS ALLEGED EXAMPLE
AMERICAN AND OIL-RICH ARAB BANKROLLING OF "THEM" (THE LEADERS)
AT EXPENSE OF "US" (THE PEOPLE).
CORRUPTION TAKES MANY FORMS, WHICH SERVE TO DELINEATE
A PRIVILEGED CLASS: DIVERSION OF PUBLIC FUNDS FOR
PRIVATE USE, FAVORITISM IN EMPLOYMENT AND PROMOTION
PRACTICES AND IN SCHOLARSHIP DISTRIBUTION, IMMUNITY
FROM CUSTOMS AND OTHER TAXES, AND CUTS IN CONTRACT
PROCUREMENT. IN ITS FINAL FORM, CORRUPTION IS
REPRESENTED BY FACT THAT CONNECTION TO KING, RATHER
THAN PERSONAL ABILITY, IS USUALLY SINE QUA NON TO
SUCCESS IN JORDAN. THESE FACTS BEING RESENTED AS
INFLATION PRESSES MIDDLE CLASS.

C. EAST BANK RIVALRIES. OUTWARD MANIFESTATION
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OF PALESTINIAN-EAST BANKER RIVALRY HAS DIMINISHED
SINCE 1974 DUE PRIMARILY TO DECLINE IN FURTUNES OF
PALESTINIANS DURING PERIOD. KING HUSSEIN'S ASSIDUOUS PUBLIC
ADHERENCE TO RABAT RESOLUTIONS, COMBINED WITH BEHIND-
SCENES GOJ POLITICAL PRESSURE ON PALESTINIANS, HAS
WEAKENED PALESTINIAN CAUSE AS TOPIC FOR PUBLIC ADVOCACY.
GOJ DIPLOMATIC SUPPORT OF SYRIAN INTERVENTION IN
LEBANON HAS PUT FURTHER DAMPER ON LOCAL ENTHUSIASM
FOR PALESTINIAN CAUSE (ALTHOUGH JORDANIAN POSITION
RESENTED IN PRIVATE BY SOME EAST BANKERS AND PALESTINIANS).

D. TRIBES. TRIBAL INFLUENCE HAS DECLINED.
PRESENT CABINET CONTAINS NO TRIBAL SPOKESMEN, WHILE

SPECIAL COURTS HAVE BEEN CREATED WHICH ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR WHAT WERE FORMERLY TRIBAL PREROGATIVES.

8. CONCLUSIONS. WHILE INTERNAL DISSENT IN JORDAN HAS INCREASED SIGNIFICANTLY, STRUCTURE AND BALANCE OF POWER UNDERLYING POLITICAL DYNAMICS OF COUNTRY HAVE NOT CHANGED SIGNIFICANTLY SINCE 1974. SOME BASIC TRENDS WITH REAL AND IMPORTANT LONG-RUN POLITICAL PROBLEMS HAVE EMERGED WHICH COULD PROVIDE DIFFICULTY. SHORT-RUN DIFFICULTIES, SUCH AS MILITARY PAY AND BUDGET SHORTAGES, ARE POTENTIALLY THREATENING BUT PRESENTLY MANAGEABLE. IN COMING MONTHS, HOWEVER, KING MAY HAVE TO MAKE SIGNIFICANT ADJUSTMENTS IN HIS AND GOJ'S APPROACH TO ISSUES IN ORDER TO COPE WITH SOME DIFFICULT BREAD-AND-BUTTER ISSUES WHICH COULD PROVE DANGEROUSLY DESTABLIZING IF NOT DEALT WITH DEFTLY AND SOON.
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